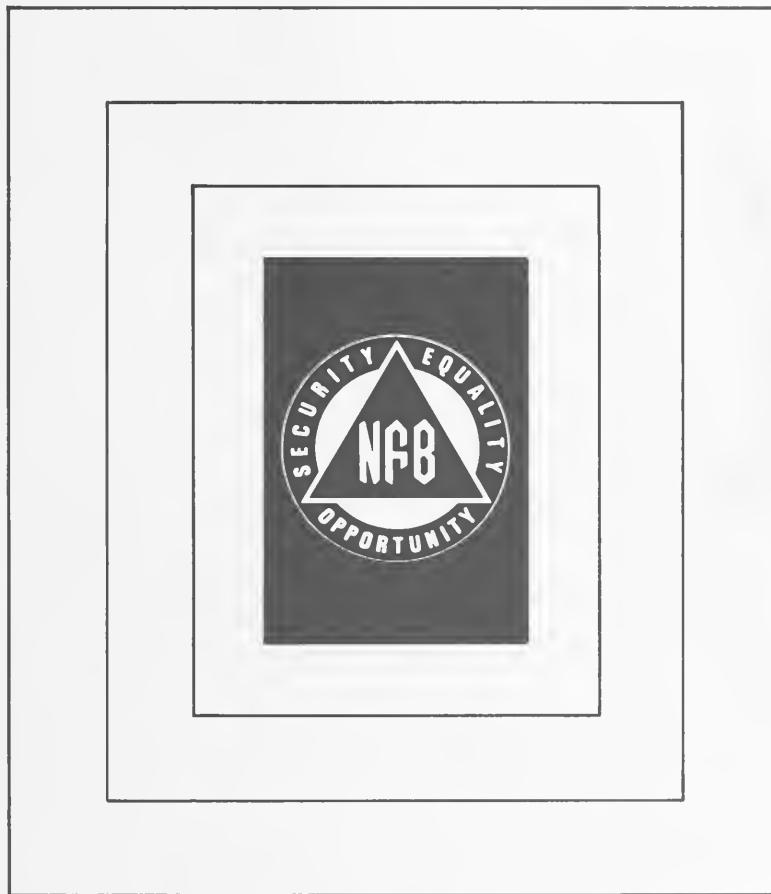


Braille Monitor



MAY, 1981

VOICE OF THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

PUBLICATION OF THE
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

MAY 1981

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THE BRAILLE MONITOR

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THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND

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SPEAKING FOR THE BLIND—IT IS THE BLIND SPEAKING FOR THEMSELVES

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ACTION IN VIRGINIA: ANOTHER NAC AGENCY UNDER FIRE

The Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped (until recently known as the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped) is a NAC (National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped) agency of the first order, and the Department's NAC affiliation has brought several marks of distinction to the agency. Among these are a *large* supervisory and "professional" staff, modern, well-appointed offices (for the administrators, of course), and a seemingly inexhaustible budget for the director (Mr. William Coppage) to travel outside of the Commonwealth of Virginia to meetings with his cronies in other states. But these are only the less troublesome conditions which are normally to be found in NAC accredited agencies, such as the Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped. Of greater and more immediate concern are some other typical conditions which seem to be found wherever NAC is present; among these are complaints from the Department's clients that services are often not available, excuses from administrators that case service money is always too tight to cover the needs of clients, and (not unexpectedly) protests from shop workers in the agency's sheltered workshops (known as Virginia Industries for the Blind) condemning Department policies which include low pay for blind shop workers, poor working conditions in the Richmond, Virginia workshop, and generally bad treatment of blind workshop employees.

The workshop situation, smoldering just beneath the surface for some time, flared into the open last fall when eight blind employees in the Richmond, Virginia workshop spoke out against objectionable practices which they said had been going on

for some time in the Department's industries program. Some of the shop workers involved are NFB members, and they were undoubtedly encouraged by learning of the progress being made elsewhere in the country to win rights for blind shop workers. Also, they quickly found that the leadership of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia stood ready, willing, and able to help expose the intolerable (yet frequently covered up) situation in the workshop.

On October 25, 1980, the employees came forward at a press conference hosted by the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia, Charles Brown, President, presiding. As will be seen from the two articles reprinted below, the press conference was highly successful; our message about Virginia Industries and related problems with the VDVH was carried via the news media to hundreds of thousands of Virginians, as well as to others in neighboring states and the nation's Capital. As we might have expected, the Department's official spokesmen had trouble getting their stories straight. On the one hand, Bill Coppage (the Department's director and former NAC vice president), who was reached by the *Washington Star* in Orlando, Florida where he was reportedly attending a meeting on vocational rehabilitation, steadfastly defended his agency and characterized the Federation leaders as headline hunters. At the same time, Mr. Joseph Wiggins (the Department's Deputy Commissioner in charge of rehabilitative services), perhaps a bit closer than Mr. Coppage to the reality of the deplorable workshop situation, admitted the failures pointed out by blind employees but tried to explain and excuse them away wherever possible.

The news conference and the articles

which resulted from it have attracted broad attention in Virginia, and we can expect continuing developments. For one thing, although Mr. Coppage and the seven member VDVH Board have an especially NAC-like reputation for being oblivious to consumer involvement, the Department's official Advisory Committee on Services found, after a preliminary investigation, that there was good cause for the complaints brought forward by employees and made recommendations for what the Committee considered to be proper corrective action. It remains to be seen whether the Department will respond positively to its own Advisory Committee, but if the past is any indication of what might occur, we can expect sharp resistance to the positive recommendations which have now been made. Blind Virginians are not hopeful, for the last time the Advisory Committee on Services took a position which ran counter to the policies laid down by Mr. Coppage (namely, a recommendation that the Department not continue NAC accreditation) the response was an attempt by Mr. Cop-

page to water down and immobilize the Committee by means of reorganization. It did not work, and now Mr. Coppage will probably have to resort to the straightforward, NAC-like approach of just pretending that the Department's Advisory Committee on Services does not exist, just as he tried to pretend to the *Washington Star* that the problems in the workshop do not exist.

But, no matter what Mr. Coppage thinks, and despite what he might not want to admit to publicly, the problems in the workshop do exist, and the blind will work together to see to it that they are solved. No one will do it for us; especially NAC will not bring about the improvements which we need so desperately, for here again in another of the flagships of NAC's fleet we have found poor service, bad conditions, and unresponsive management. By now there should be no doubt, NAC is a sinking ship, we are only waiting for its final gasp while the signs of struggle and ultimate failure are everywhere to be found. Here are the reports from Virginia:

TODAY'S NEWS IN THE REGION

Blind Workers Controversy in Va.
From the *Washington Star*, October 22, 1980

The head of the Virginia Commission for the Visually Handicapped yesterday denied charges by a group for the blind that a sighted supervisor struck a blind worker with a clipboard at a state workshop.

William Coppage, responding to allega-

tions by the National Federation of the Blind of Vir "They're out for headlines," said Coppage from Orlando, Fla., where he was attending a conference on vocational rehabilitation. "If you choose to give that to them than that's your choice."

BLIND WORKERS' CLAIMS OF LOW PAY, LAYOFFS ARE ACKNOWLEDGED

by WANDA STARKE-CONES

From the *Richmond News Leader*, October 27, 1980

A Virginia Department for the Visually Handicapped official says "there is some truth" to accusations brought by blind workers at a state-supported workshop about low pay and layoffs.

But Joseph H. Wiggins, deputy commissioner for the agency, says many complaints about the Virginia Industries for the Blind workshop at 1535 High St. "have been exaggerated." Nevertheless, he said the agency will "look and reassess things."

Wiggins' comments came in response to allegations raised by eight blind employees at a news conference Saturday at the Downtowner Motor Inn, Seventh and Marshall streets.

Wiggins showed up at the news conference but was asked to leave by Charles Brown, its organizer.

The issue of treatment of blind workers at the workshop surfaced last week. Juanita Johnson, a blind seamstress, said she was hit in the face with a clipboard by a sighted supervisor for no reason. Department officials said Ms. Johnson was hit in self-defense.

Allegations Cited

Brown, president of the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia Inc. an activist organization, contended that:

- Although the overwhelming majority of the production workers are blind, all of the shop supervisors are sighted.
- Blind workers usually are paid on a piece rate basis and their earnings fall well below minimum wage.

- Sighted workers generally are given higher paying and more regular tasks; consequently, sighted workers usually earn higher daily wages and are subject to fewer layoffs than blind workers.

- Numerous layoffs and equipment failure further reduce earnings of blind workers.

"There is some truth to that," Wiggins said. "There have been layoffs and blind workers have been affected more than sighted workers. And yes, it is true that some blind workers are making less than minimum wage."

But Wiggins said that was the case recently because more blind workers were involved in an operation in which a "contract didn't come through for pillowcases."

There are 32 blind workers, 14 sighted workers and six sighted supervisors at the workshop, according to Wiggins.

He said the workshop receives about \$163,000, or 25 percent of its funds from the state. Other revenue is derived from contracts with federal, state and local government and subcontracts with private businesses. He said the workshop specializes in sewing such items as safety vests, pillowcases and food service worker caps and making writing pens.

Wiggins contended that blind workers are not restricted to certain tasks because of job bias but that some assignments require sighted workers. He added that sighted workers must be sued (sic) first for new contracts to determine "what difficulties we might have."

Said Held Back

Brown contended that some blind workers were capable of handling certain tasks but were held back and led to believe that they could not produce. But a few workers, who were involved in a crossfire with the blind speakers during the news conference, agreed with Wiggins.

Mamie King, a machine operator at the workshop for 26 years, said she would "have problems" working on a task such as suspenders because it requires a large amount of skill.

Wiggins said there are no blind supervisors because the agency could not find blind workers with supervisory experience. But he contended that there are several blind people within the department in key roles. He also said the agency has been working to improve the operation of the equipment.

Wiggins said the agency will study the allegations. "If we think anything is off-base, we will make some changes," he said.

"The best thing we can do about the layoffs is try to keep the contracts coming in and put out good products.

ONE WAY TO BECOME A FEDERATIONIST

by W. HAROLD BLEAKLEY

It was the summer of 1943. I was 25. That's a long time ago.

I was school psychologist at the Western Pennsylvania School for the Blind in Pittsburgh. I was also head boy's supervisor, assistant scout master and assistant boy's physical education instructor. I was on duty from 6 A.M. to 10 P.M. and on call from 10 P.M. to 6 A.M. I was off duty every other Saturday and the alternating Sundays. My earnings were \$850 per year plus room and board for nine months.

In June of 1938 I had graduated from the School for the Blind in Pittsburgh, first in my class, and then had gone to the University of Pittsburgh totally unprepared for the outside world. I got my B.S. degree in February of 1942, cum laude, and probably would have wound up in the sheltered shop of the Pittsburgh Association for the Blind except for the fact that World War II was at its peak. My major in undergraduate school at Pitt had been mathematics and clinical psychology because I didn't know what else to take. In the spring of 1942 the school psychologist at the Pittsburgh School for the Blind was drafted. The law required

schools to have a psychologist and at that time psychologists who could see were hard to find. I may have been the only one around, sighted or blind. Be that as it may, I was offered and accepted the position of school psychologist with all the attending duties, in the spring of 1942.

When I came out of Pitt I really believed that blind persons could achieve their rightful place in society if only their true capabilities could be proved objectively. I believed the way to do this was on the basis of psychological tests. I was convinced that psychological tests would prove that blind persons had capabilities equal to those who could see and, once this was proved, the world would accept us as persons able to compete in all walks of life for which we were academically qualified. Believing this, I eagerly accepted the opportunity to become school psychologist at the Pittsburgh School for the Blind. It was a godsend—a golden opportunity. I didn't mind all the hours of work. I would have the opportunity to prove what I believed and, besides, it was the only job offer I had.

By the summer of 1943, one year later, I

felt differently. I saw the Pittsburgh School for the Blind in a totally different way. I saw it, on the one hand, as a world within a world that kept blind students from knowing what the real world was all about and on the other hand, an outer world removed entirely from the world as it really was. I saw very clearly as a member of the faculty what I had not seen as a student. The students were not being given any understanding of the society they would be a part of upon graduation. At the same time their expectations of what they might achieve were being brought to the lowest possible common denominator.

There was no vocational guidance. No successful blind person came to talk to the students. No information concerning higher education was presented. Independent mobility was not only not taught, but it was frowned on. A totally blind student could not leave the campus without being accompanied by a partially sighted student or a fully sighted person. Teaching the skills needed to function as an adult man or woman appeared to be outside the responsibility of the school.

By the spring of 1943 my dreams were crushed. I was disillusioned. I knew for a certainty that proving that blind persons were equal, through the use of psychological tests, would not open either educational or employment doors. What's more, I had serious doubts about the whole idea of trying to prove that blind persons were equal through the use of psychological tests. I had come to believe that blind persons needed to be taught the skills that would make it possible for them to compete in everyday life and that they themselves would have to open the doors to education and employment.

Now we come to the summer of 1943, when I was 25. I had decided that I did not want to continue in the employment of the

Pittsburgh School for the Blind. I heard that the Pennsylvania State Council for the Blind, now the Office for the Visually Handicapped of the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, was looking for home teachers. I understood that home teachers taught blind persons the skills they needed to become independent. This seemed to me to be the way to go. Consequently I wrote to Gayle Burlingame, Chief of the State Council for the Blind, asking him for an interview on a particular date in July of 1943. I got a letter back from him stating that on the date that I had asked for an interview he would be attending a meeting in Columbus, Ohio, and that he would be happy to talk to me if I were going to be in Columbus at that time. I decided very quickly that I would be there.

We met for lunch. After talking for about an hour my heart sank when he told me he was not going to hire me as a home teacher. He said that my personality was not suited for home teaching. He went on to say that he had another job that he thought I could do and that was better suited for me. It was the job of industrial placement agent—placing blind persons in competitive employment.

He asked me if I knew anything about placement. I told him, "No." He said they would teach me and he asked me if I wanted the job. I said, "Yes." The deal was closed. I didn't know what the job was all about, but I felt I wanted it and I was sure that I wanted to be associated with Gayle Burlingame.

That was in the summer of 1943. In September I got a call from Gayle telling me I could come to work in Harrisburg the next day. I went in to see the superintendent of the school for the blind and gave him my resignation. He asked me why I was resigning. The best thing I could think of was salary. When I told him what I would be

making on my new job, he told me I was a liar because no one would pay me that kind of money. I had had some feelings of guilt about resigning with short notice, but in the face of the superintendent's comments my guilt floated away.

I reported for work in Harrisburg on September 13, 1943. After a few minutes of conversation in Gayle's office, he handed me a railroad ticket and said, "You leave for Philadelphia on the 11:15 A.M. train today." He told me where I would be staying in Philadelphia and who I was to meet when I got there. He wished me good luck. I was scared. I had never been to Philadelphia before. I had done very little traveling and I wasn't familiar with what I was to do. All I knew was that Gayle said I would learn and I couldn't let this man down. I went to Philadelphia and all over the state by bus, train or whatever transportation was available and I learned how to place blind persons in competitive employment—90 of them in my first year.

But I still had a lot to learn about who Gayle Burlingame was. All I knew at that time was that he expected more of me than any person had ever expected before and I liked it even though I was scared. It made me feel more of a person than I had ever felt before.

Two weeks later, when I came home from a trip to Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, I learned more about the kind of man Gayle Burlingame was. My wife told me that the movers had brought our furniture from Pittsburgh and demanded \$75.00 before they would unload our things. We didn't have \$75.00. She didn't know what to do, so in tears she went in to talk to Gayle. He reached into his desk drawer, handed her his check book and told her to make out a check to pay for the moving and pay him back when we could.

A few weeks later he asked me if I liked to

play cribbage. Not only did I not know how to play it, I had never even heard of it. He offered to teach me. I accepted. Thereafter, until his untimely death a couple of years later, approximately every other Saturday night, he was a guest in our home playing cribbage.

But learning to play cribbage was the least of the teaching during our many Saturday evenings together. Over the cribbage board and a glass of beer I learned who Gayle Burlingame was and, more importantly, I learned who I was. I learned that Gayle was one of the seven at Wilkes-Barre who founded the National Federation of the Blind in 1940. He told me of his belief that equality for the blind lay only in a strong national movement and of his frustration concerning the fact that various local groups were resisting the national movement—what we today know as "localitis." He brought me down out of the transitory warmth of an ivory tower to the cold reality of life as it is. He taught me the mechanisms of political power and the necessity to have it.

About myself, I learned that he was expecting a great deal. He would not excuse me on the basis of blindness. He expected top performance. I learned that my expectations of myself were too low and that this was what had been taught to me by my past experience.

He gave me the opportunity to prove my worth. He asked me to write the first state plan for rehabilitation services for the blind in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. I didn't know how to do it, but I learned how and I did it.

He had no children of his own and when my wife was pregnant with our first child he said he would be honored if we named it after him. Our first child was a girl and her name is Kathleen Gail.

The blind Americans who met in Wilkes-Barre in 1940 to found the NFB were giants

—out of step with their time but marching in time with the drum beat of eternity. One by one they have slipped from the scene—Gayle Burlingame probably being first in 1945 and Glen Hoffman being the last just recently. But the vision they had has burst the walls of the little upstairs room in which they met and has spilled across the nation and indeed, the world. Through them, under the leadership of Jacobus tenBroek and

Kenneth Jernigan, it is a wellspring on our path to first class citizenship.

There are a thousand ways to get the message that leads one to become a Federationist. The way I came was through the love and respect generated for Gayle Burlingame over a cribbage board and a glass of beer—Gayle Burlingame, one of the blind Americans out of step with his time at Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania in 1940.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S MAILBASKET OF GOALS, MEMBERSHIP, AND RESPONSIBILITY

Under date of February 3, 1981, Loraine Stayer (who is one of the leaders of the Federation in New York) wrote the following letter to a Federationist. As her letter indicates, Lori Stayer is sighted. This underscores once again the fact that the sighted can be as dedicated to our cause and as imbued with its spirit as those of us who are blind. The Federationist to whom Lori Stayer was writing lives quite a distance from the meeting place of the local chapter, and he has not yet set his priorities so that it is possible for him regularly to attend. Here is Lori Stayer's letter:

Dear _____

I'm sorry our conversation terminated so abruptly. That lady from Newsday never did call back, and I felt badly, because what we were talking about was important.

You said something interesting, which set me to thinking: That your parents objected to your entering into the "World of the Blind" and what was wrong with the "world of the sighted," anyway? The problem here, as I see it, is that the National Federation of the Blind does not represent the world of the blind per se. That is, joining us does not automatically exclude you from the world of the sighted. I am a mem-

ber of NFB, and I am not blind. There are many members who are sighted, though the majority of our members are blind, and that is as it should be. Rather, the National Federation of the Blind should be likened to a brotherhood of those whom blindness affects in one way or another, or a union, whose job it is to make a better life for its members. In fact, the chief job of the National Federation of the Blind is to assist blind people in coping with the world of the sighted. If we lived in a world of the blind, there would be no need for NFB. But we don't. Though we have 50,000 members nationally, our membership is scattered throughout a population of 250,000,000. If it is true that two people of every thousand is blind, you can see that many people who are blind do not know of NFB, or choose not to be associated with NFB, are adrift among that 250,000,000 without the benefit of the fraternity that has grown among our membership.

I said that NFB is a movement based on love. This is true. If a movement is based on hatred, it cannot exist for very long, or grow very large without disastrous consequences. That is not to say evil cannot exist—it does. But its outcome is evil, and its trappings are evil. A movement that is based

on love yields a very different result. This movement is based on the love of blind people for one another. As a result, our efforts yield benefit for all blind people in this country regardless of whether or not they join NFB. But those that do, who work for the results, reap double benefits. The first is that which is shared with all blind people. The second is that which grows from the knowledge that one has helped to bring the first about. And in the end, that which helps—truly helps—one segment of the population, cannot help but help the rest. In the words of the poet John Donne, "No man is an Island."

In a movement like NFB, there is no room for self aggrandizement. If we try to glorify ourselves at the expense of the movement, we wind up alone, wondering why we have been passed by. Though you are not guilty of this, I do know a few who stay on the fringes of the movement, liking the idea of using it to further their own careers, but want to do only the barest minimum to stay in touch—not really to help—the movement. This is something like a spectator watching a tug of war, ready to ally himself with the winner at the end of the match. Not really fair.

We also talked about things standing still for you at this part of your life. It's an interesting thing, but it has always seemed to me that we make our own prisons, and we make our own keys. It seems to you that you have been placed in front of a wall and told to climb it. At present you see only the wall. In the future, you will see the rock climbing equipment with which to manage it. What you want to do now is to have patience, and to begin to examine your alternatives, because you do have some. Ask

yourself these questions: What is security? Must the future be the same as the present? and What can I do to achieve the goals I want?

Of course, because of the nature of the last question, you must set your goals before it can be answered. That is why I asked you to do the reading I mentioned. If it does not help, it will at least set the processes moving.

We also talked about leadership. Unfortunately, we did not really have time to go into what makes a good leader. Leadership must be demonstrated first before one is invited by the NFB President to participate in a National Leadership seminar. And the invitations to seminars are considered carefully before being issued. Before one can demonstrate leadership, one must know pretty much where one is heading. We would like to see you at our meetings, though we know it is difficult for you to come. Perhaps you might consider other ways to come than cabbing it to the train station on a Sunday. For example, you might stay overnight with another Federationist, and travel in with him. Though to you this may seem like an imposition, it might not be one at all to your fellow Federationist, if it means you can become more active.

I hope we will have a chance to talk more on this subject in the future. Your presence—rather than your absence—in our chapter can only serve to strengthen it.

Sincerely yours,
Lori Stayer
Greater Long Island Chapter
National Federation of the Blind

MORE TROUBLE FOR THE WASHINGTON COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND: SUE AMMETER IN HOT WATER AGAIN

When the Washington State Commission for the Blind was established in 1977, it seemed like a major triumph for the blind. Kenneth Hopkins, a long-time member of the organized blind movement, was named as Director, and there was absolutely no question that the persistent work of the National Federation of the Blind to establish an ideal structure for good programs had paid off. There was general rejoicing among the blind throughout the country.

Then, danger signs began to appear. Hopkins hired the state president of the Federation and most of the other principal leaders of the affiliate as agency staff members. Instead of the blind having control of the agency, it quickly became clear that Hopkins as Commission Director intended to control the blind. At that time Sue Ammeter was President of the National Federation of the Blind of Washington. From the very day of her employment by the Commission she seemed to be a different person, trying to create dissension in the national movement and seeking to destroy everything which she had formerly advocated. Hopkins, Ammeter, Ed Foscue, and the rest of the former Washington leaders seemed to be trying to build a power base, not only in the northwest but throughout the whole country. One man (Kenneth Hopkins) administered the government money that paid for it all and with that money seemed to go control and total abandonment of every idea of Federation philosophy, freedom of the blind, and human dignity.

As Federationists know, it was found necessary to reorganize the Washington affiliate in 1979 and to expel Kenneth Hopkins and his close circle of would-be "control-

lers" of the blind. Hot on the heels of all of this, scandal broke over the Hopkins Washington Commission like a tidal wave. The *Seattle Post Intelligencer* conducted an exhaustive investigation, which uncovered facts that simply could not be ignored. Hopkins "resigned" under fire; the blind of the state reorganized; and we began once more to try to build the positive programs which we had sought to establish in the state of Washington but which were still only a dream. In issue after issue of the *Monitor* last year the facts and details were reported.

When a new Director for the Washington Commission (William James) was appointed last year, the blind hoped that a new day of constructive building and opportunity might begin.

Recent developments raise questions as to whether the battle in Washington is finished. In spite of all of last year's scandal and of the fact that Sue Ammeter was so closely identified with Kenneth Hopkins, she was recently appointed to head up the Orientation Center at the Washington Commission for the Blind. This brought a storm of protest from the blind throughout the state, as well as an article from the *Seattle Post Intelligencer*.

We herewith reprint three documents which round out the story: A resolution passed January 28, 1981, by the Greater Seattle Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind; a petition by the students, former students and supporters of the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington State Commission for the Blind; and an article from the *Seattle Post Intelligencer* dated February 5, 1981.

RESOLUTION**National Federation of the Blind of Washington
Greater Seattle Chapter**

WHEREAS, the purpose of an orientation center for the blind is to provide the necessary training to blind persons in order that they may achieve economic and social independence; and,

WHEREAS, it is imperative that the staff of an orientation center for the blind be well grounded in the philosophy that blind persons (with the proper training and opportunity) can attain first-class citizenship in our society; and,

WHEREAS, political controversy and personal ambition have a pernicious impact upon the purpose of an orientation center for the blind; and,

WHEREAS, the credibility of the Washington State Commission for the Blind, of which the Orientation and Training Center is a part, has been eroded as a result of the highly questionable political and administrative activities of the former director and some of his immediate administrative staff; and,

WHEREAS, the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington Commission has lost credibility in the blind community as a result of adverse publicity; and,

WHEREAS, Mrs. Sue Ammeter, Assistant Director for Administrative Services under the former commission director, has been selected to direct the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington Commission for the Blind; and,

WHEREAS, during her tenure with the Washington State Commission for the Blind, Mrs. Ammeter has herself been the center of much controversy, displaying behavior which is contrary to the best interest of the blind community in general, and to the image which a director of an orientation center for the blind must possess; and,

WHEREAS, Mrs. Ammeter's education and experience are manifestly void of the qualifications necessary to assume the responsibilities of the directorship of the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington State Commission for the Blind; and,

WHEREAS, the National Federation of the Blind of Washington, Greater Seattle Chapter, has grave reservations regarding the obvious lack of criteria in hiring a director for the Orientation and Training Center.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this organization demands a written explanation of the process by which the directorship of the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington Commission for the Blind was filled and the rationale for Mrs. Ammeter's selection.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that this organization strongly urge the reconsideration of Sue Ammeter's selection as Director of the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington State Commission for the Blind.

ADOPTED, January 28, 1981

A Petition

We, the undersigned students, former students, and supporters of the Orientation and Training Center of the Washington State Commission for the Blind, herewith state concern and raise questions about the appointment of Sue Ammeter to direct the center.

It is our belief that the Commission for

the Blind has an obligation to the blind individuals who will attend the center to offer them an excellent quality of training and to insure their well being and safety. We further believe the Director of the Commission for the Blind has an obligation to the blind people of Washington to select the most qualified applicant for the position of Assistant Director in charge of Orientation and Training regardless of any other considerations.

Therefore, we respectfully raise the following questions and request a written response. We further request that the student and teaching staff names which appear on the petition be withheld from Ms. Ammeter for fear of reprisal.

1. What are Ms. Ammeter's qualifications for this position? Has she had teaching experience in an orientation center? Has she had experience in counseling and other elements of the vocational rehabilitation process?
2. Has Ms. Ammeter had experience supervising a teaching staff? Does she recognize the value of assessment in a training program?
3. Under Ms. Ammeter's supervision, how will the teaching staff be evaluated? Will job performance be the primary criteria

for evaluation or will political affiliation and personal relationships also be considerations in the evaluation of the teaching staff?

4. Regarding accountability, will Ms. Ammeter initiate a process of documentation which will provide information regarding student progress and program quality?
5. Will Ms. Ammeter, her family, and her friends have free access to the dormitory facility attending social functions and having meals with the students?

We believe the essential qualifications for the individual directing the training program at the center are: vocational rehabilitation experience at the service delivery level, training or experience in educational evaluation, teaching experience, a demonstrated understanding of blindness, a demonstrated ability to work with VR clients, sound moral character, the ability to speak and write effectively.

We believe after you have answered our questions about Ms. Ammeter, you will realize she is not a qualified person to direct the orientation and training program. Therefore, we petition you to reconsider this appointment and open applications to qualified individuals both state-wide and nationally.

COMMISSION FOR BLIND TARGET OF MORE CRITICISM

by HILDA BRYANT

A critical legislative audit and a state-wide protest by blind clients are the newest troubles for the state Commission for the Blind.

The audit contends the commission doesn't need the additional 12 employees it wants to hire. Not hiring them would save almost \$225,000, the audit says.

William James, the commission's newly appointed director, said seven of the 12 new staff positions have been filled during this biennium but five will remain vacant under Gov. John Spellman's hiring freeze. This should save about \$93,000, he said.

The audit also criticized spending \$14,000 annually for a blind ombudsman.

James conceded that paying an ombudsman with commission funds appeared to be a conflict of interest.

"I agree that the advocacy system needs to be independent but I haven't thought of a way to do it," he said.

The audit also faulted the blind agency's practice of training blind food vendors in a cafeteria in its Seattle headquarters when better, less costly training programs are available in local community colleges.

Meanwhile, James is the focus of a well-organized protest by blind people who use the agency's services.

A petition aimed at overturning the appointment of Sue Ammeter as director of the Seattle-based orientation center has collected 150 names in Seattle, Bellingham, Spokane and Olympia.

The petition challenges Ammeter's job qualifications to head a program that trains the newly blind to accept and deal with their blindness.

James conceded that Ammeter, who is blind, has no experience counseling or training blind persons. He said he established no minimum qualifications for the position, but set up a three-member panel to interview candidates. Ammeter was the top choice of the panelists, he said, and he concurred with the selection. The position pays more than \$24,000 per year.

Ammeter has a reputation among the blind as a political activist closely associated with former commission director Kenneth

Hopkins, who was forced to resign from the scandal-wrecked agency last year.

Blind petitioners opposing the appointment of Ammeter, however, are basing their objections solely on her inadequate professional qualifications and lack of experience. Organizers of the petitions are keeping their identity a secret out of fear of retaliation.

James said he recognizes that real fears plague many of the agency's clients and he is deeply concerned about that.

James said he is exploring new directions for the blind food vendor training program, as recommended by the auditor.

"I would agree there need to be some changes made in the present training system," James said. "The state of Oregon has a program and has invited us to send our vendors there to be trained at cost. We are also looking into the training available in local community colleges."

The state audit also criticized the agency for sloppy bookkeeping that keeps blind persons in programs long after they should be released, for exempting too many middle-level managers from state Civil Service, for management practices that blur lines of authority and for skirting the law in contracting services for the blind.

All of the agency contracts criticized by the state auditor have been allowed to lapse and are being replaced by fee-for-service arrangements, James said.

A CLOSER LOOK AT CLOSER LOOK

Doris Willoughby is a progressive and intelligent teacher working with blind children. Although sighted, she is a dedicated member of the National Federation of the

Blind. When she recently found a television public service spot detrimental, she said so—courteously, forthrightly, and in true Federation fashion:

Des Moines, Iowa
January 6, 1981

Public Relations Department
CLOSER LOOK
Washington, D.C.

To whom it may concern:

I am a teacher of blind children in the public schools, and have found CLOSER LOOK materials very helpful, both to me and to the families of my students.

However, last week I was very much dismayed to see on KCCI-TV a public-service item which was sponsored by CLOSER LOOK but which actually *worsened* public attitudes toward the blind.

This announcement explained that non-special-education children need special attention also—attention to help them understand handicaps. It then showed a blindfolded child attempting to pour from a pitcher of milk; when he spilled it badly, his classmates first laughed and then said, "It's OK."

The problem in public education is *not*

convincing people that blindness causes difficulties. They are already all too convinced of that. The great problem comes in convincing everyone—both the sighted and the blind—that the difficulties can be overcome, and that blind people *can* be capable students, employees, and citizens.

Next week I will be working on arrangements for a blind eighth grader in a home economics class. I will need to convince the teacher that a blind student can pour liquids neatly, measure ingredients accurately, thread a sewing machine alone, etc. Sad to say, I sincerely hope that the teacher did *not* see your spot announcement.

I am sure that you will want to give this problem your attention and bring your television presentations up to the excellent quality of the printed materials which I have seen. Let's show how a blind student can *succeed* in school.

Sincerely yours,
(Mrs.) Doris M. Willoughby

THE FIRST SHALL NOT NECESSARILY BE LAST: MORE ABOUT ASSOCIATES

by TRISH MILLER

Congratulations to the 86 Federationists who got their first associate contribution ever during the period from June 1, 1980, through January 15, 1981! Our associate income during this period was \$23,648, brought in by 260 fine Federationists. This leaves 49,740 Federationists who could help the movement greatly by taking the plunge and earning their first associate ribbon for our coming convention in Baltimore. The new recruiters are:

Omega Abraham, Alaska
Albert Alexy, New Jersey

Benjamin Alk, Connecticut
John Beaulieu, Massachusetts
Frances Bell, California
Susan Benbow, New Mexico
Constance Blackman, North Carolina
Wilma Brodley, Indiana
Dorothy Campbell, Florida
Lucy Carpenter, New York
Margaret Cavanaugh, Alaska
John Cheadle, Nebraska
Janis Clauzing, Michigan
Frank Coppel, South Carolina
Peter Cote, Massachusetts

Richard Crawford, Iowa
Albert DiMarzio, Ohio
Gary Doty, Nebraska
Carol Ebner, Colorado
Gailand Fischer, South Dakota
Jennie Fletcher, District of Columbia
Joe Fletcher, California
Azilee Floyd, Texas
Edwina Franchild, Minnesota
Beatrice Freeman, Indiana
Francis Frustaci, Pennsylvania
William Fuller, Iowa
Stephen Garabedian, Rhode Island
Ted Garcia, Alaska
Myrthen Gauerke, Minnesota
Joe Gonzales, New Mexico
Raymond Graber, Kansas
Mark Hamm, Alabama
Sally Ann Harper, South Dakota
Isaac Heyward, Georgia
Colleen Hurley, Maryland
Linda Hurlock, Montana
David Hyde, Oregon
Bill Isaacs, Illinois
Lettie Jackson, Texas
Gwen Janssen, Alaska
Helen Johnson, Ohio
Tommie Johnson, Georgia
Sandy Kelly, Colorado
Charles Kuhnwald, Ohio
Joe Lamers, Colorado
Shirley Ann Lee, Connecticut
Sylvia Matthews, Maryland
Blanche Moore, Pennsylvania
James O'Connell, Texas
Linda O'Neal, California
Claire Oliver, Massachusetts
Johnny Ott, Michigan

Jeff Pearcy, Texas
Keith Perrin, Connecticut
Mark Plantz, Maryland
William Roberts, Indiana
Les Rush, Maryland
Mary Ann Saunders, West Virginia
Mary Jo Seiler, Illinois
Allen Smith, Virginia
Dinah Smith, California
Karl Smith, Utah
Donna Sorenson, North Dakota
Roberta Sorenson, Indiana
Jimmy Sparks, Arkansas
Ethel Susong, Oklahoma
Wilnetta Sutton, Maryland
Esther Swygert, Maryland
Gladys Taylor, Texas
Milton Taylor, Utah
Leroy Thomas, Texas
Ray Thorpe, Indiana
David Ticchi, Massachusetts
Carmen Trujillo, New Mexico
Eileen Truschke, Illinois
Lois Tucker, South Carolina
David Walker, Michigan
Blanche Ward, Missouri
_____ Wardell, New York
Margaret White, Ohio
Brenda Williams, Maryland
Lena Williams, Texas
Tom Winholtz, Minnesota
Gary Wunder, Missouri
Carl Wyatt, Missouri

The other good news is that Oklahoma and North Dakota have their first associate recruiters ever.

END OF AN IDYLL FOR TALKING BOOKS: BABBLING BOOKS

by ALAN HEWITT

(Note: The December, 1980, Jewish Braille Review carried the following article, which originally appeared in the New Republic November 1, 1980. Alan Hewitt is an actor, who has recorded many talking books. It is not surprising that he has experienced problems with Mr. Cylke, the head of the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped. Most of us have gone that route.

Mr. Cylke tends to be extremely rigid and unbending, plus being very touchy about it all. Unless he is continually praised and flattered (or if there is the slightest disagreement with anything he does, does not, says, fails to say, thinks or fails to think), he sulks, takes reprisals, pouts, and demonstrates all the maturity of a spoiled child addicted to tantrum behavior.

Even so, the remedy which Mr. Hewitt suggests would not seem to be helpful. If authors and publishers withhold permission for the National Library Service to record their material as talking books, the blind reader (not the Library) is punished. Surely there is a better way.

The Library of Congress is not all powerful. It is not the Lord of the universe, immune from criticism and secure from public opinion. However, it provides services which the blind urgently need and cannot afford to lose. The answer is not destruction but reform. Mr. Cylke is dispensable. Library service for the blind is not.

Mr. Hewitt's article should cause all of us (blind and sighted alike) to take a close look at what Mr. Cylke and the National Library Service are doing. After all, the money which they spend is not theirs—it is ours: ours as blind people. It was appropriated by the Congress for our benefit—not for theirs. They are merely the vehicle and the instrument. They should behave accordingly. Perhaps Mr. Hewitt's article will help provide balance and perspective.)

If there is one use of tax dollars that few taxpayers could resent, it is the services offered by the National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, a division of the Library of Congress. By 1937—14 years before commercial long-playing records—engineers hired by the American Foundation for the blind had developed a long-playing “Talking Book” and a cheap machine on which to play it. Today featherweight flexidiscs carry close to 88 minutes per side.

All this costs the individual listener nothing. People certified by their doctors as eligible for these records receive a record player free, all recordings free, and parcel post both ways free, from the nearest regional library.

The authors and publishers of books and magazines receive no payment for this use of their copyright material. Most authors aren't even aware of a clause in the standard publishing contract that grants this permission as a public service. They blush with pleasure when informed that one of their books is to be recorded for the blind. I suspect that other recorded authors like Dickens and Dostoevsky, Henry James and Marcel Proust, Faulkner, Mark Twain, and James Boswell also would be proud.

Actors with experience in radio were the obvious first choices when Talking Books were young, and so they have remained through the years. They are fluent sight-readers, and bring a rapport with the microphone that cannot be acquired overnight.

Many otherwise skillful stage actors have been unable to bring the printed page to life for the listener. As a good actor must persuade the audience and himself that he is the character, the successful narrator of books must, subconsciously or not, adopt the personal tone of each author. The narrator becomes the author. It is identical to the one-to-one relationship obtaining between the sighted reader and the author. A recording is a success only if the listener is convinced that the author is telling his or her story directly. Dean Acheson once wrote to me that a friend who heard my recording of *Present at the Creation* was "sure I was in the house with them."

Biography and history can require prodigious advance preparation, especially when many foreign languages and names of places and people are involved. Bertrand Russell's *A History of Western Philosophy* required 13 hours of work with its 56-page index before the first word of 845 pages of text could be recorded. The Russell tome involved 31 sessions of two or more hours, five days a week, averaging about 27 pages per session. For contrast, a 355-page novel by Morris West, *The Salamander*, in larger type than Russell's book, averaged 47 pages per session, taking eight days in the studio.

Narrators are paid on a "piecework" basis, and all are paid at the same rate per hour of completed tape, far less than they might receive for commercial recording work or other professional activity. Regular narrators include a radio announcer, the star of a daytime TV serial, a university professor, a famous black actor, an actress currently in a Broadway hit, the voice behind 100 TV commercials, an actor about to leave for his next film in Hollywood, two actors playing off-off-Broadway, an actress just returned from a regional theater, and some actors "between engagements" who

are happy to break off visits to the unemployment insurance office.

An escutcheon for Talking Books might display the unabridged dictionary embracing an atlas on a field of encyclopedias, above the motto, "Look It Up," printed in the phonetic alphabet: Luk it \wedge p. Each volume on the studio's reference shelves displays the finger marks of constant use. On their own time, readers visit consulates, tourism and airlines offices, and specialist libraries throughout the city, and call department heads at universities. Some take the ultimate step, tracking down the author if he or she is alive and accessible by telephone somewhere in this country, only to discover amazingly often, that it had never occurred to the writer to consider how some name might be pronounced.

Through the years, subtle aids were developed to enhance the listener's comprehension and enjoyment, without compromising the author's text. For example, efforts to provide authentic pronunciation of peculiar words or names are futile if the listener cannot relate to these unfamiliar sounds. So sometimes the narrator, casually and unobtrusively, interpolates the spelling in his account of the author's text. Also, when short phrases or passages in a foreign language are encountered, an English translation is sometimes offered in vocal parenthesis. Other minor changes of this sort became standard practice after consultation with the studio director.

The narrator of a book becomes its most vigilant proofreader. He cannot skim, his attention may not wander, he must concentrate on every word. The process of reading aloud often discloses misspellings of words or proper names, incorrect dates, and other varieties of publishing absent-mindedness. A word or a phrase may be so unclear as to suggest that a printing error has distorted the author's intention. Lines of type may

be garbled, transposed, or missing, all common occurrences in paperback reprints.

Since Talking Books began, studio directors have had to expect constant interruption from readers asking advice on solving these sorts of problems. The conscientious reader would not shy from dialing the publisher, and asking to speak to the editor of a particular book. This might lead to direct consultation with the author as the final authority.

Although years in the Talking Book studios will not make the actor rich or famous, participants agree that seldom in their other professional activities do they experience such stimulation in the practice of their vocation, such pleasure in serving a considerable social purpose, and such a bonus as the opportunity to read books they might never approach on their own initiative. "Reading here in my spare time," said Alexander Scourby, the unquestioned dean of narrators, "I've got around to reading all the Dostoevsky and Fielding and Sterne, and so on, that I'd otherwise still be meaning to read when I went to my grave."

American Foundation for the Blind was an idyllic refuge, an oasis of the intellect, until 1973. Then the studio director reached retirement age, and a new director was placed in charge of the National Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped in Washington. Only shards remain of the ivory tower.

The new regime in Washington soon began to crack down on deviations from the written text, from fears, improbable as they seem, that these infinitesimal adjustments affectionately described above, conceived only to bring author and listener closer together, might endanger copyright permissions. New rules emerged. Spell out a strange word or name? Strictly forbidden. Translate a foreign phrase into English?

Strengst verboten. Substitute character names for personal pronouns at the beginning of a side? "It is not incumbent upon the narrator to presume the attention span of the listener." Provide a factual update of an older nonfiction book (for example, the death of a figure in a work of history) in the form of a reader's note? "Consumers of the talking book program are members of the general public and need not be characterized as special." Correct errors with the approval of the author? "Changing the print also places the listener in a position of access to information not available to the general public."

Deliberate perpetuation of printed errors, under ukase from Washington, is the most galling of all restrictions upon the narrator, who is concerned to protect his author from the vagaries of the typesetter. But the voice of NLS declares: "The blind and physically handicapped have indicated that they wish to be treated like everyone else and thus want no changes in the books when read."

Even so, a skeptic might ask, what inner vision informs the listener that the blatant error he hears comes from the printed page? Suppose that he has been following in a novel a shady character referred to as "the young Armenian" who is suddenly transformed into "the young American." Or he is attentive to careful explication of the Gospels in a history of Jesus, when the Old Testament remarkably shifts to the New. Or, *pace* Rand McNally, he learns that Julius Caesar crossed the Channel into Kent at the southwestern tip of Britain. Hundreds of recorded titles have been distributed by now with equivalent flaws intact. Does the listener really feel grateful for being treated no differently from anyone else in suffering these confusing errors?

The corps of proofreaders in Washington must shudder, like their New York counter-

parts, as they give a deaf ear to such mistakes, ever impeccably enunciated, while directing grave attention to chair squeaks, page rustles, lip smacks, stomach grumbles, or other heinous deviations from "high standards of recording" which may justify a tape's being returned to New York for correction.

A year ago, I wrote to Washington: "From frequent comparing of notes with my colleagues, I know that I speak for all readers when I urge high-level reconsideration by Washington of some of its present directives." I asked for the opportunity to come to Washington at my own expense "to discuss mutual problems." After some hounding I got myself invited to meet with the Library of Congress bureaucrats. I was told they would be pleased to meet in person a man who had recorded more than 225 titles in 16 years for the Talking Books program, but any mention of their directives must be excluded from conversation. I decided to save my money.

Since September 1979, the recording studios have found no further assignments for their previously busiest narrator. I had recorded 16 titles in 1978, including three months spent on Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson*, and 14 titles in 1979 up to the

time that my letter reached Washington. The director of NLS, Frank Kurt Cylke (pronounced "silky"), has told me that "Narrators are hired for their voices, not for their intellectual ability," and that it would be "inappropriate" to discuss "narration criteria" with such "employees of an organization." Finally there was a letter from the American Federation for the Blind: "I feel that considering all the positive and negative aspects of your work, that the dis-harmony outweighs all other factors. We shall no longer be contracting for your services."

A devoted user of libraries, and annual contributor to some, has learned that the great Library of Congress is not immune to the diseases infecting any Washington bureaucracy, that the fiat over its fiefdoms may not be questioned and will be upheld by the highest echelon—until exposed to outside air. The ultimate power resides with authors and publishers, who have the unquestioned right to withhold further permissions. That is the final weapon. They should agree to use it.

Alan Hewitt

Alan Hewitt is an actor who has recorded many books.

MORE ON CIVIL RIGHTS AT THE ALABAMA INSTITUTE FOR THE DEAF AND BLIND: THE JOSIE RANDOLPH CASE, SECTION 504, AND NAC

by JAMES GASHEL

NAC (The National Accreditation Council for Agencies Serving the Blind and Visually Handicapped) has, we are repeatedly told, improved the quality of services to the blind in this country. In response we have said, equally often, that NAC has actually harmed the blind. The evils of NAC are many; but more evil than its other

evils is this constant propagation of the myth of quality service, for the fact (as we have shown many times before) that NAC does everything but promote quality service means that it has no value whatsoever, or (even worse) that there is actually negative value in its continued existence.

In the February *Monitor* we presented

more tangible evidence of NAC's negative value by showing the example of the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind (a stalwart NAC agency), which was found in violation of several Federal civil rights laws. The violations discovered by Federal civil rights investigators primarily concerned discriminatory employment and educational practices at the Institute's School for the Deaf and Blind, but there was also indication of more widespread disregard for civil rights requirements throughout the entire agency. After reporting these violations, Federal authorities were assured that the Institute had "cleaned up its act."

This was where things stood last fall, but now the Institute finds itself the subject of new civil rights charges brought by a sixty-eight year old blind Alabamian (Josie Randolph) who, despite her persistent efforts, has been denied employment in the sewing department in the sheltered workshop. Ms. Randolph is a member of the National Federation of the Blind. Her charges against the Institute are documented in a complaint which was filed in December, 1980, with the Office for Civil Rights of the Federal Department of Education, Atlanta region. The complaint was filed by our Alabama president, Tom Mills who is assisting Ms. Randolph.

Everyone agrees that Josie Randolph is a competent sewing machine operator, well suited for the type of work available at the Alabama Industries for the Blind, the sheltered workshop operated by the Institute. So, what is the problem? Well, it seems that somewhere back in her history, Ms. Randolph must have gotten mad at someone (or, if you listen to the folks at the Institute, several someones); and she acquired a reputation for ill-tempered conduct. This was a decade ago, when Josie last worked at the Institute, but somehow she is still remembered for this alleged behav-

ioral disorder; and as a result she continues, even today, to be blackballed from future employment in the sheltered workshop. Her efforts to secure employment again in the shop have spanned a period of more than five years, but so far no satisfactory results have been achieved.

For most of us, this experience alone would be enough to trigger an actual behavioral disorder, or as some might say, you would be inclined to "fling a fit." But through it all, Josie Randolph has kept her cool, pursuing her rights through the legally established channels of appeal. First she tried appealing to the agency, using its written grievance procedure, but the upshot of this was a kind of kangaroo court proceeding which denied Josie the due process right to a fair hearing, the right to confront her accusers, and the right to examine and cross examine opposing witnesses. Moreover, after the kangaroo court had ruled against her, Ms. Randolph's right to appeal to the full Board of the Institute was cut off by a simple motion which declared that the Board would not hear individual appeals, despite the published agency grievance procedure which said it would.

So, having no alternative, Ms. Randolph is now forced to seek her civil rights through other established means. Her Federal complaint charges the Alabama Institute with several violations of Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. This well-known Federal law bans discrimination on the basis of any handicap, mental or physical, and assures that persons who are not actually handicapped, but regarded as handicapped, will have equal protection against discrimination. Employment discrimination and discrimination in providing services are prohibited.

In Josie Randolph's case there is no disputing her physical condition, she is totally blind. Also, there can be no disagreement

that Institute officials believe Ms. Randolph has a mental disorder; whether she does or does not it doesn't matter, just as long as they "regard" her as having one. Based on the belief that Ms. Randolph has what are termed, "serious psychological problems," Institute officials have steadfastly refused to offer employment to her, despite the fact that she is qualified for a job in the sewing room. The only reason for not hiring her is the alleged psychological problems.

Now this is an agency which is supposed to offer quality services to the blind, and one of its alleged services is to provide employment opportunities for blind persons and a sheltered employment setting. But this same "quality service" agency ("quality service" NAC style, that is) arbitrarily decides to exclude Josie Randolph by labeling her a misfit and therefore not eligible for its help. Josie Randolph is sixty-eight years old, and she needs to earn enough money to supplement a meager Social Security check each month. Given her age, the social attitudes about blindness, and the fact that her work experience primarily involves sewing in the sheltered workshop, she is most unlikely to be able to secure employment anywhere else but at Alabama Industries for the Blind. This is an obvious conclusion from the facts, and it makes all the worse the discrimination being practiced by Institute officials.

The leaders of the NAC, AFB, ACB,

ALL combine have talked as though our struggle to reform NAC is nothing more than a nasty power grab by a few radical blind people who will not be content with anything they do not control; nothing could be further from the truth. In the first place, they know full well that our numbers are more than just a handful, despite their propaganda to the contrary. But as to our motives, all they need to do is to read the Josie Randolph case, for it is all written there for anyone who cares to see. This proclaiming of quality service is hollow nonsense. The record of the Josie Randolph case proves that this NAC accredited agency has been given more than five years to offer employment to a blind person in need of help, and after denying this help the agency has had even more time to reconsider its position—a position that is rooted in cruel and unbending prejudice. Some may call us radicals; and others may term us malcontents; but (if anything) the facts in the Josie Randolph case show that we have used excessive restraint. What kind of agency does NAC accredit? Look at the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind and what it is doing to Josie Randolph. This is NAC—NAC in its typical operation: nothing for the blind, but full support for the agency administration, with glowing reports and a seal of accreditation proclaiming "quality service."

BLIND VENDOR FIGHTS BACK IN IOWA: THE HESTER BRUNER CASE AND THE IOWA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

by JAMES GASHEL

Federationists are aware that for about a year, now, there has been disruption and turmoil in our Iowa affiliate. This was no secret at the 1980 National Convention, as

resolutions and other matters pertaining to the Iowa problems were brought up on the floor for open debate by the principal parties involved.

Some people said at the time that the dispute was purely a matter of internal Federation politics which had arisen over differences of style and approach, and these same people assured us that there was absolutely no difference concerning philosophy and questions of principle. In short, they characterized the problem as a "fight within the family," while assuring us of their steadfast loyalty to the movement. These were the assurances made by John Taylor (the current director of the Iowa Commission for the Blind) and Sylvester Nemmers (the current president of the National Federation of the Blind of Iowa) and their proponents, but their good faith and loyalty were seriously questioned by others who made persuasive protests that the principles and philosophy of the movement in Iowa were being compromised and sacrificed in order to defend the interests of the Iowa Commission for the Blind and the conduct of its administrative personnel.

People on this side of the question told us that the Commission (for twenty years a model of what one would want to have in a State agency serving the blind) was veering sharply away from the policies which had been carefully developed to build a program of maximum responsiveness to the needs of the blind. They said the Commission was fast becoming "just another agency of the Iowa State government," that this new direction was a sell-out to buy temporary peace with State officials and other State agencies who have been somewhat jealous of the Commission's unbeatable record of progress on behalf of the blind, and that the compromises of policy and principle which John Taylor was making in order to buy peace with others (including the *Des Moines Register*) were sacrificing the quality of the Commission's program and diminishing the agency's ability to provide meaningful services to the blind. Furthermore (and

perhaps most disturbing of all), there was plenty of evidence that Mr. Taylor and some of his staff wanted to maneuver the NFB of Iowa into backing the changes being made in program focus and defending the Commission against criticism from the ranks of the blind as services were watered down and lost in the ever-rising tide of the State bureaucracy. To put it bluntly, the blind were being asked to stand still while the Commission's administration sought security for itself by trading away all of the good things which the agency had to offer. Then, after all was said and done, the blind would be expected to speak well of the Commission and to beat their chests with pride to think that no one wanted to attack it because of jealousy over its successful record of performance.

All of which leads to the case of Hester Bruner, a blind Iowan, a current recipient of services from the Iowa Commission for the Blind, and the manager of the cafeteria located in the basement of the Iowa Department of Job Service building in Des Moines. Mrs. Bruner is not widely known in the Federation, for she has only recently joined the movement. In fact, when her problems with the Commission arose, Mrs. Bruner had barely heard of the Federation; yet she sought our help since she had nowhere else to turn. Speaking of nowhere else to turn, it is worth noting that, upon hearing of Mrs. Bruner's difficulties with the Commission, Sylvester Nemmers (as already mentioned, current president of the NFB of Iowa, but also a blind vendor himself, chairman of the State Committee of Blind Vendors, and loyal follower of and often prime spokesman for John Taylor), began to put out the word that Mrs. Bruner's problems were of her own making and that the Commission would have to do something about her situation or the cafeteria in the Job Service building would be lost by the program. So,

in view of Mr. Nemmers' publicly announced bias in favor of the Commission in this instance, Mrs. Bruner had nowhere else to turn but to seek the help of Federationists in the State and nationally who were willing to look at the situation without the primary motivation of defending the Commission and John Taylor, whether right or wrong.

The problems Mrs. Bruner was having related to taking over management of the Job Service cafeteria. Beginning in July, 1980, the Commission entered into an arrangement with the Job Service under which a blind person in its business enterprises program would operate the cafeteria in the Job Service building, serving employees and visitors to the building as well as patrons from other buildings in the area. As a matter of fact, the cafeteria was taken over for operation by a blind person pursuant to a State law (the little Randolph-Sheppard Act) which was enacted by the State legislature in 1968. At the time of the enactment of that law, the Job Service cafeteria was already in operation under different management, and the law allowed the operator to continue the business until expiration or substantial change in the contract with the Job Service. So, twelve years later, the cafeteria in the Job Service building became available for management by a Commission sponsored blind vendor. Hester Bruner was assigned as the manager, and she began operating the business with Commission help in mid-July.

So far, so good—blind person takes over State cafeteria with Commission help. This has been the successful story in the other principal State buildings in Des Moines including the capitol building itself and the associated State office buildings in the capitol complex. In fact, the business which Sylvester Nemmers operates is one of (if not the) largest vending facilities sponsored by the Commission and is located in a large new

State office building near the capitol; some have commented that Sylvester's business relationship to the Commission and the many favors he continues to receive from it might give him a strong reason for finding ways to support Mr. Taylor at every turn.

The Commission's food service program in the State office buildings began in about 1965 when cooperation was obtained from the governor (at that time Harold Hughes) and the Executive Council of the State. The initial understanding was that a blind person, chosen by the Commission, would manage the large cafeteria in the Lucas State office building, near the capitol and connected to it by means of an underground tunnel. Later, the Lucas Building operation having satisfied the doubts that blind people could manage a food service business, the program was expanded to include the capitol building, and, with the passage of the little Randolph-Sheppard Act in 1968, cafeterias were added in other State, County, and Municipal buildings throughout Iowa. Of course, this process of establishing the opportunity for blind persons to operate the food services in major State buildings required political skill on the part of the Commission, its director, and the organized blind of the State, but it also necessarily involved rock-solid faith in the capacities of the blind and a willingness to defend the program against persons who (for whatever reason) might want to attack it. The strength of the Iowa Commission for the Blind and of the Iowa affiliate in the pre-John Taylor era can in no way better be illustrated than by pointing to the provisions of the state's little Randolph-Sheppard Act, which is probably the best such law in the books in any state—or, for that matter, ever passed.

In the natural course of events, and pursuant to the provisions of the little Randolph-Sheppard Act, the Job Service cafeteria inevitably became available for operation

by a blind person sponsored by the Commission's business enterprises program, and Hester Bruner was chosen to be the manager. She came to the business fresh from six months of on-the-job training, working most of this time in the cafeteria of the Lucas Building. Moreover, prior to entering the Commission's business enterprises program, Mrs. Bruner had thirteen years of food service experience under her belt, working for a nursing home in a small community a few miles southeast of Des Moines. So, Mrs. Bruner was no stranger to food service work, and, as a result, she received high praise for the performance of her assigned duties during the six-month training.

Her training complete, Mrs. Bruner took over full responsibility for managing the Job Service cafeteria in late July, 1980. By September the business was going quite well, and Mrs. Bruner was earning more money than she had ever made in her life—all seemed well and good. There were few indications of problems, but by October matters took a turn for the worse. The business itself was still booming and doing better than Mrs. Bruner had expected, but at the same time, some of the employees in the Job Service building began to complain about the cafeteria. Much as the seasons may be expected to move from winter to spring to summer to fall, and just as one might anticipate that the sun will rise in the east and set in the west, it is a predictable phenomenon that wherever there are cafeterias, and especially wherever they serve a relatively captive audience (such as workers on the State payroll or students at a State university) there will be complaints. As a matter of fact, dealing with complaints about the food service in the capitol and in the associated State buildings around it has become a normal way of life for the Commission and the blind persons who manage these businesses. For

example, it has become an annual ritual that, upon the opening of the legislature, someone will introduce a bill to amend the little Randolph-Sheppard Act so that private enterprise (not a blind person sponsored by the Commission) will have the opportunity to take over the food service in the capitol and surrounding buildings. There are always charges of cold food, slow service, and often allegations of unsanitary conditions. Many object to the fact that food in the capitol is served on disposable plastic dishes and that patrons are expected to eat it with disposable plastic utensils. This policy was adopted on order of the Governor and State Executive Council to keep down the noise of the clatter of china and metal flatware, which was another complaint of State officials working in the capitol building.

The bottom line is that complaints about the food service in these buildings are to be expected, and the important thing is how they will be responded to by the Commission and manager involved. Such grumblings, along with flowery rhetoric and overblown charges are good for a few newspaper headlines and a little free publicity for House members and Senators in the dull days at the beginning of the legislative session each year—everything normal, no damage, and nothing to worry about: Nothing to worry about, that is, assuming that the director of the Commission is on the ball, knows his way around politically, doesn't panic or offer to sell-out, and keeps his cool. A normal political game which is annually played and adds to the spice of life.

Inevitably some complaints will be valid, since no operation is perfect, but more than fifteen years of experience with the program shows that there are a variety of motivations which give rise to the complaints and, of course, there is always the question of public attitudes about blindness which tends to cause some to resent having a blind person

responsible for serving their food. After all, the ancient stereotypes suggest, how can blind people keep themselves clean, let alone being expected to maintain sanitary conditions in a cafeteria? This is, at least, part of the problem, but there is also the natural tendency to growl and grumble about the food service (especially in an employees' cafeteria) no matter who provides it. Then, too, there are some who just plain resent what they regard as the "Blind Commission's" having a corner on the market.

All of this must be taken into account in considering the situation which Mrs. Bruner faced in mid-October at the Job Service cafeteria, but there are other factors which go into the mix. In the first place, there was the element of change, since the previous manager of the Job Service cafeteria had owned and operated the business for well over a decade, and, as a result, the patterns and relationships with employees in the building were firmly established. While it would not be fair to say that there was an harmonious arrangement between the previous manager and the employees, at least there was general peace and calm, since understandings had long ago been reached primarily by means of many skirmishes. You might, in fact, term it a "cold war," with the principal combatants being the previous cafeteria manager on one side and a committee (especially created by some of the Job Service employees) to monitor the cafeteria, on the other. Historically, the committee would bluster and complain, and the manager would respond as she saw fit. Then, too, the agreement between the Commission and the Job Service introduced several new wrinkles into the cafeteria service. The most important of these was the concept that patrons would be responsible for bussing their own dishes. This is a standard feature of Commission agreements with department heads in other State buildings, but it de-

parted sharply from the custom of the Job Service cafeteria, which was that bussing of dishes would be provided as a service to employees and others patronizing the business.

This, in short, was the situation, so it should not have been surprising to anyone that there would be complaints about the cafeteria service under the new arrangement with the Commission; after all, it is only to be expected that anyone would get a certain honeymoon period from the employees in the building, after which there would be testing and posturing to establish degrees and areas of control. Especially this would be the case in any building where a committee had already been created for the purpose of "improving" the cafeteria service, and it was therefore not unusual that the Job Service employees' committee flexed its muscles in order to establish itself as a viable force on behalf of employees using the cafeteria.

To assert what it regarded as its prerogatives, the committee solicited and received complaints about the cafeteria. These were compiled in mid-October and presented to James T. Robinson, the director of the Commission's business enterprises program; note the significance in the fact that the complaints were not presented to Mrs. Bruner first. It was clear that the employees regarded the "Blind Commission" (not Mrs. Bruner) as the responsible authority for managing the cafeteria. This was unfortunate enough, but far more distressing was the way in which the Commission responded.

On October 16, 1980, Mr. Robinson met with the committee at its request and agreed to exclude Mrs. Bruner from the meeting. This was his first misdeed, but there was more to follow. What was actually said in the meeting is not a matter of firsthand knowledge, but it is reported that the committee presented certain objections to the cafeteria service as it was being provided,

and apparently the feeling was expressed that Mrs. Bruner was not a suitable manager. In addition, some seventy written complaints, compiled prior to the October 16th meeting, were presented to Mr. Robinson. But whatever was said or done at the meeting, the important thing was how Mr. Robinson responded on behalf of the Commission and most importantly on behalf of Mrs. Bruner. Of course, one might reasonably begin by questioning the advisability of Mr. Robinson's meeting privately with the employees' committee at all since this practice would tend to invite more criticism than it would solve and since it would inevitably downgrade Mrs. Bruner in the opinion of the employees. Moreover, if there were problems, Mrs. Bruner should have had the right to learn of them firsthand and to negotiate solutions with the employees' committee. After all, the business enterprises program should be designed to promote independence, and up until October 16th, 1980, this approach especially characterized the Iowa Commission's posture in handling similar situations.

As disturbing as this is, however, Mr. Robinson's behavior with respect to Mrs. Bruner both at the October 16th meeting and following was worse. Just how bad Mr. Robinson's behavior was can be seen in a memorandum which he filed reporting on what was said to him at the meeting and what he said in return. Also, following the meeting Mr. Robinson wrote a letter to Ms. Coleen Shearer, Director of the Job Service. The memorandum and letter not only reveal a great deal about Mr. Robinson's personal philosophy on blindness (the approach he chose to take in Mrs. Bruner's situation is obviously based upon his attitudes about the blind in general), but these documents also give us a candid, firsthand look into just how far the Iowa Commission for the Blind has backed down from its

historic posture of defending blind people, for some reason now finding it more convenient to apologize for us and to assure everyone that problems will be handled by the Commission, not by the blind themselves. Furthermore, it is questionable whether the problems actually existed at all, and certainly Mr. Robinson should have evaluated this before backing down in the meeting with the committee. Anyway, regardless of this, Mr. Robinson's behavior can only be characterized as "all too agency-like," a mark of distinction which, in former times, was avoided like the plague at the Iowa Commission. Because of their significance, Mr. Robinson's memorandum for the file, dated October 16, 1980, and his letter to Coleen Shearer, Director of the Iowa Department of Job Service, dated October 20, are here reprinted in full:

IOWA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND MEMORANDUM

Re: IDJS Cafeteria - Meeting with
Employee Cafeteria Committee
Date: 10-16-80
From: Mr. Robinson
To: File

Today the writer met with the IDJS Employee Cafeteria Committee, persons present were Dave Cline, Chairperson, Maxine Dysktra, and Mary Grey, Pat Morris, Jane Soundall, Mr. Erwin Frerichs. The meeting was held in Mr. Frerichs office, one of the committee members indicated that more privacy was needed for the meetings.

The meeting consisted of reading approximately 45 of the over 70 written complaints that were turned in to the members of the Cafeteria Committee by Iowa Department of Job Service Employees. The complaints dealt with drinks that were too watery or too much ice, entrees that were too small in

portion for the price that was charged salads were often found with wilted lettuce, breakfasts were often put out cold, eggs were not fixed properly, more variety is needed. There has been some talk according to the Committee of boycotting the Cafeteria. Several expressions were made regarding the inability of persons to visit or communicate with the operator. A general consensus was agreed that the operator needs to listen more and pick up on constructive comments made to her.

A number of comments were expressed regarding the bussing that is taking place and "the surly attitude of one of the employees." . . .

These complaints were written by various people in the departments located throughout the Job Service Building.

The writer listened to the comments and concurred with the Committee that these problems can be corrected, that in fact they would be corrected. The writer stated that a Commission BEP staff member would be on location whatever time is necessary to implement the comments, corrective suggestions that were offered by the Committee.

Some discussion was held in reference to the blind employees working at the Iowa Department of Job Service and how the serving line might be expedited in terms of helping them know what is being served so that a cafeteria staff member would not need to read everything that was included on the menu that day. One suggestion was that a braille card be prepared which would list the entrees and the food items offered each day so that a person could know before they arrive what they might be interested in for lunch that particular day.

Toward the end of the meeting, Mr. Frenrichs who had to step out a few moments earlier, returned and he had a Memorandum from the Director of the Iowa Department of Job Service, Ms. Colleen Shearer who

wanted her complaint included which dealt with a grey ham sandwich...

The general consensus of the Cafeteria Committee was that Hester had been given sufficient time to prove that she could in fact handle the job and the persons present felt that prior to the meeting, they would ask that Hester be replaced as the operator, as the manager of this Cafeteria.

As the result of our meeting, there was a general consensus that in view of the fact that there are two months left on Hester's first six month probationary period; and in view of the fact that the Commission will have a staff member on location to implement corrections as needed that the Committee would work with Hester to seek to make her tenure a success as manager of this cafeteria.

The Committee asked to meet a month from now and determine at that time the corrections that have been made and any other changes that would be necessary in order to provide the best food service possible for the employees of the IDJS.

October 20, 1980

Ms. Colleen Shearer, Director
Iowa Department of Job Service
Des Moines, Iowa

Dear Ms. Shearer:

I am in receipt of your Memorandum to the Iowa Department of Job Service Employee Committee, and deeply regret the circumstances necessitating the same.

The Commission for the Blind has taken corrective measures with the present food service operator to ensure quality and freshness of each food item. Also, a member of the Commission's Business Enterprise Staff will be on location to implement the suggestions of the Employee Committee and en-

sure for Iowa Department of Job Service employees the finest food service possible.

Sincerely,
James T. Robinson, Supervisor
Business Enterprise Program

Now, if you think about it, the reality of what is being said in the foregoing documents is not pleasant to contemplate. In the first place, the problems are accepted as fact; this, as already indicated, is a highly questionable judgment under the circumstances. Moreover, many of the complaints were matters of trivia, and most actually concerned matters of the cafeteria which Mrs. Bruner was not responsible for controlling. For example, the State maintenance crew assigned to the Job Service were to vacuum the carpets and mop the floors, and they simply were not doing the best professional job. Furthermore, the Commission, not Mrs. Bruner, decided that the patrons would bus their own dishes, yet the employees in the building were not told this and, as a consequence, attributed the self-bussing rule to Mrs. Bruner. But beyond the nature and legitimacy of the complaints themselves, the Commission's response is really at the heart of it all, and that response was not one calculated to show support for Mrs. Bruner or confidence in her abilities as a blind person. Consider what was said: Mr. Robinson explained that Mrs. Bruner had only two months left on her "probationary period," implying that the Commission would at least have to give her two more months, but then she could be removed at any time. This was tantamount to issuing an open invitation to the committee to ask for Mrs. Bruner's removal in two months—all that was said in her defense was "it's too early to toss her out." This statement in itself was damaging enough, but Mr. Robinson

went on to make it worse by admitting that the committee's objections could best be responded to by placing a Commission staff member (a sighted person) at the location for as much time as necessary. Again, consider what this says—"after all, you can't expect the blind person to be able to deal with these difficulties. We will have to have a sighted person from the Commission handle the situation for her." What does this say about independence, and how did this solution convince the Job Service employees that a blind person (any blind person, not just Mrs. Bruner) could manage a cafeteria? The answer is that the solution of putting a Commission staff member at the location contributed to and compounded the problem and, in fact, became the problem itself.

To illustrate further how the Commission itself became the problem for Mrs. Bruner, consider the incident involving the cooking of eggs: Mr. Robinson had received certain complaints to the effect that eggs served by Mrs. Bruner were full of grease; whereupon, Mr. Robinson undertook to instruct Mrs. Bruner in the art of producing a top quality fried egg on a grill. Specifically, Mr. Robinson told Mrs. Bruner that he agreed with the complaint, he said her eggs were too greasy, and to solve this, he advised Mrs. Bruner to blot each egg on a towel in the process of removing it from the grill and placing it on the serving dish. Bear in mind that Mrs. Bruner had been in food service work for thirteen years, and never before had she heard of the idea of placing a fried egg on a towel before serving it; but Mr. Robinson insisted that this would be the proper technique.

In view of her experience in food service (which far exceeds that of Mr. Robinson) Mrs. Bruner thought she might know a better way than the method he was suggesting, so she presented him with a plate of freshly fried eggs which she had just taken

from the grill. Mr. Robinson flew into an absolute rage; Mrs. Bruner was not following his specific instructions, and to show her how exasperated he was he flung the plate of eggs at the stove, causing the eggs to land in the grease trap beside the grill and splattering grease all about the area; then he stalked out of the room in a huff. Later, while specifically not denying the incident (including the actual throwing of the eggs), Mr. Robinson said that Mrs. Bruner was the one who was being uncooperative. This is the sort of behavior we have come to expect from the more custodial agencies but not from the Iowa Commission for the Blind—not, that is, until the John Taylor era.

On October 24, 1980, Hester Bruner requested an administrative review to be conducted by the Commission as the first step in the grievance process available to blind vendors under the Randolph-Sheppard Act. On November 11, the review was conducted by David Quick, Assistant Director in charge of Field Operations at the Commission. Three weeks later Mr. Quick issued his decision and found, in general, that everything was fine. But everything was not fine for Mrs. Bruner, since, without the Commission's help to defend her, she was forced to operate under an unbroken cloud of suspicion. Moreover, many saw her tenure as being only temporary, since, after all, the Commission's response strongly implied that she would only have two months to go. Finally, she was not seen as the manager of the cafeteria, since day after day a sighted Commission representative was present "to resolve any difficulties and respond to the committee's protests." Thus, the situation continued as Mrs. Bruner tried to do the best that she could in a bad situation while realizing that the worst part of it all was the Commission's failure to back her and to provide meaningful assistance in order to make things better. On December 15, Mrs.

Bruner requested a full evidentiary hearing (the second step in the grievance process) and this hearing (at this writing soon to be conducted) will be held before a hearing officer of another State agency not involved at all in the Commission's policy which has led to Mrs. Bruner's difficulties.

It has already been suggested that the Commission's behavior in this entire sorry episode has been entirely too agency-like. We would not want to imply that all agencies serving the blind are weak or bad or that they lack faith in the blind people they are supposed to help, for such is not the case. However, there are far too many such agencies, and (regretably) the Iowa Commission for the Blind is joining the number. It is a matter of fact and public record that the Iowa Commission for the Blind has historically rallied to defend blind vendors and other blind persons who are the subject of abuse based on the traditional public attitudes and prejudices about the blind. Over the years, the Commission has had an especially fine and well-known record of defending the vendors in its business enterprises program. This is not to suggest that vendors are faultless, nor is it to say that Mrs. Bruner had a perfectly well-run business, but it is to say that the Commission for the Blind owed her its best efforts (and at a minimum, a reasonable attempt) to insure that complaints were viewed realistically and that Mrs. Bruner would in every way be supported in making suitable response. That this was not done is obvious from what has been said and from the Commission's own documents. Perhaps this sort of thing helps explain why there were many last summer who said that John Taylor has abandoned our philosophy and turned the agency, which the blind of this country helped to build, into a thoroughly bureaucratic, "don't rock the boat" oriented program.

The blind of Iowa (and in a broader but

very real sense, the blind of the nation) are paying a heavy price for what has transpired in Iowa so far in terms of the virtually complete destruction of the best agency for the blind we had going in this country. The building at Fourth and Keo still exists, and the Commission for the Blind still occupies every inch of the space within it. At least to the present, the physical property remains intact, but the philosophy and progress are gone; the leadership is gone; and most important of all, the spirit and the love are gone. Blind Iowans are fighting back, and Hester Bruner is fighting back. Regardless of what decision comes in her hearing, Mrs. Bruner is still the operator of the Job Service cafeteria, and she is managing the business both competently and independently, with no more Commission staff on hand. This in itself is a victory, since she would probably not now be the operator of the cafeteria had she not stood forth to resist the philosophy and actions of the Commission and if we had not helped her. Years ago the blind of Iowa rose up to reform the Commission, and as a result we created the best agency for the blind in the entire world. Today that agency has fallen, but its record of outstanding performance and meaningful service to the blind of Iowa cannot be erased from our history. Nor can anyone erase the positive philosophy and spirit which continue among the blind of the state, for in the long run blind Iowans will not tolerate what is happening to Hester Bruner or to the other blind citizens of the State.

Moreover, there are still many staff members left at the Iowa Commission who remember and believe and understand but who have been intimidated into silence. Their time to speak and act will come—and soon. Beyond this, the Legislature, the State officials, and the general public of Iowa have been proud of the accomplishments of the program and of the progress made by the blind of the State. As they come to recognize (and this is happening with increasing rapidity) how those who have been given charge of the Commission have abandoned its purpose and betrayed its philosophy and ideals, they will exact a terrible retribution. What was built once can be built back again; it is only a question of time and the will of all of us to fight back.

We must not spend time looking back to the past or mourning what has been lost. Iowa was a model program and a stronghold of freedom and progress for the blind. Such is no longer the case. All of that is gone. However, the impact on the lives of the blind (not only in that one State but throughout the nation) can never be lost or diminished. The Iowa experience has helped every blind person in the nation and the world. It is a stepping stone to further progress and accomplishment. Moreover, the Iowa program can and will be rebuilt and strengthened. There is every reason to believe that it can become once more the leader and the cutting edge in work with the blind. The decision is ours.

VICTORY OVER WHAT

by AL EVANS

A short while ago, I found myself unable to sleep. After a few vain attempts at rolling over and trying to doze off, I got up, went downstairs, and switched on the tele-

vision. I twirled the dial, but found little of interest until I encountered a movie which I later discovered was entitled, "Bright Victory."

In less than fifteen minutes, I became so angered at the theme and direction of this movie that I couldn't have slept if an anvil had dropped on me. The film depicted a World War II veteran who had been blinded in combat. He was wedged into a hospital ward with other blinded servicemen, but no one knew how to do anything. They couldn't determine if a man was black or white; they couldn't cut the meat on their plates; they spouted stupid and corny comments about hearing versus seeing, and so on.

Any Federationist knows the entire drill that is tattooed upon his or her brain when becoming blind. Phrases like, "Someone else must become my eyes"; and, "Though I'm no longer a whole person, I'll manage somehow, even without my eyes"; and, "I know she'd marry me, but I don't want to be a burden to her for the rest of her life," caused me to breathe fire.

This movie seemed to have been written, directed, and acted in by personnel straight from 15 West 16th Street, New York, New York! Every time a scene changed there occurred an "oops, excuse me" sort of fumbling stupidity that is best characterized by that misbegotten caricature of image and stereotype, Mr. Magoo. Nearly every scene was also replete with the well-meaning and pompous friend who consistently allowed as how he, "Forgot you couldn't see," and begged forgiveness from that point on.

This farcical film even had the honorable fiancee who was simply too honest to marry her newly-blinded lover because she, "Just couldn't feel so restricted by the weight of your blindness" and, she "Knew you'd understand."

At this stage I turned off the television and literally sat there for the rest of the night. Thoughts poured in and out of my mind, and these thoughts centered mostly on the question of why it is that so many sighted people appear compelled to concoct

such weird ideas about blindness. There are the obvious answers about misplaced charity and fear of blindness, but these are merely surface explanations. I concluded one salient point, however.

I really do not thoroughly understand why the majority of sighted people entertain their crazy thoughts about us, but without the National Federation of the Blind how much worse would things be? For example, I truly wonder if I would be permitted to write this article. I doubt that other blind people would be allowed to read it. The independent spirit which NFB champions would never be enjoyed by so many thousands of blind people, and you and I would probably not have the opportunity we now have to go out and seek substantially gainful employment, or be able to work at what we do if we already have jobs.

The sort of mentality that permits the creation of films like "Bright Victory" and that operates the AFB is the clearest evidence possible that NFB is more necessary now than ever before. When educators today still try to discourage the use of the word, "Blind"; and when these same educators continually insist (regardless of the circumstances) that large print and tapes be used to the exclusion of Braille, then it is a certainty that the organized blind movement must forge ahead stronger, bigger, and better than ever.

The salient aspect of "Bright Victory" and of the AFB mentality is that they and those who create and administer them would have us either be normally sighted, or be reconciled to something much less than normal, productive human beings. In their judgment we must be done for, not do for ourselves.

Once my own special brand of wrath over this ridiculous movie had calmed a bit, I recognized something else: Without the National Federation of the Blind, its principles,

its progress, and its checks and balances upon the dismal system that would otherwise exist for us, we could very easily be slaves, underlings, and doormats of society.

One line in the movie will remain with me forever. As the blinded veteran was returning home, his parents awaited, actually fretted away the hours at the train station. The father mentioned something about Larry being a "blinded" man now. At this point, the mother sliced in on his words and snarled, "Don't you ever use that word again!"

This film was made a short time after World War II, but the thinking expressed by it still prevails in many quarters today. Blind is a dirty word in many circles, but let us be thankful that we have learned the simple (yet seemingly complex) truth that "it is respectable to be blind." We do, indeed, know who we are, and there is no doubt about the fact that we will never go back.

RECIPE OF THE MONTH

by RALPH SANDERS

RALPH'S CURRIED MUSHROOMS

(Note: The talents of Ralph Sanders are not limited to the forensic, the pugilistic, or the erudite. They also extend to the culinary. One might almost say that he is a raconteur of gourmet gastronomy. Peruse the following recipe, and you will see what theorem he postulates concerning saprophytes and related fungi.)

Clean and rinse mushrooms. Button mushrooms are preferred, but if larger mushrooms are used, cut into bite size. Completely cover mushrooms with liquid, consisting of three cups of water to one cup of vinegar to three teaspoons of salt. Soak mushrooms in this liquid for one hour. Remove and drain. Break eggs into dish, and beat until thoroughly mixed. Dip mushrooms in egg and roll until completely covered in a mixture of one cup of flour to three teaspoons of curry, with salt and pepper to taste. Fry in deep fat until golden brown. If fat is sufficiently hot, this may require as little as 60 seconds, or it may take 3 or 4 minutes.

MONITOR MINIATURES

More about the year (or will it be the decade) of the baby:

No wonder we're happy,
No wonder we're glad—
Our baby arrived!
Now we're "Mother" and "Dad"!

Name: Gregory David
Date: January 27, 1981, 7:40 a.m.
Weight: 7 lbs. 10 oz. 20 inches
Parents: David and Diane Dawson

Jim and Sharon Omvig are becoming leaders in their church, the Christian Temple of Baltimore. On February 8, 1981, Mr. Omvig delivered the sermon on Laity Sunday. His message centered on the theme, "reaching out to others." Mr. Omvig will take office July 1 as a trustee of the church.

Another note about Jim Omvig:

He had surgery for a hernia on February 18 and remained in the hospital until the following Saturday. He is now back at work and engaging in activities at his usual pace.

From Margaret Bohley, Treasurer, St. Louis Chapter of NFB:

"The St. Louis Chapter has instructed me to send the NFB a \$25.00 check in memorial for Jim Couts. We, from Missouri, were proud of the work he did and recognize he was past Second Vice President of the NFB.

From Gilda Finazzo:

At the meeting of the New York City Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind January 15, 1981, the following were elected:

Larry Gamliel, President; Rami Rabby, First Vice President; Gilda Finazzo, Second Vice President; Eileen Ross, Secretary; and

Esther Hertz, Treasurer. Rosalie La Rosa, Harold Wenning and Pat Logan were elected to serve on the Board of Directors.

From the American Printing House for the Blind:

APH now announces availability of a recorded edition of the 1980 *World Book Encyclopedia*. The total cost is \$1,176.00. The Encyclopedia comes with its own special Indexing Cassette Player. The full set can be stored on approximately six feet of shelf space. For further information contact: American Printing House for the Blind, 1839 Frankfort Avenue, Louisville, Kentucky 40206.

Peter Salmon, one of the long-time leaders in work with the blind in this country, recently died at age 85. From 1917 until his death he was associated with the Industrial Home for the Blind in Brooklyn, New York. From 1945 to 1966 he served as its Executive Director. During the latter part of his life he was closely identified with work with the deaf-blind. We often found ourselves in sharp disagreement with Peter Salmon, but we always knew where he was coming from and where he stood. His life and work (whether one agrees or disagrees with the stands he took) form an important part of the expanding heritage of the blind.

From Peggy Hignell, Secretary, Poughkeepsie Chapter, NFB of New York:

At our January 9 meeting we elected the following officers: Betty Bator, President; Ellen Robertson, First Vice President; Doris St. Thomas, Second Vice President; Peggy Hignell, Secretary; and Ed Blodgett, Treasurer. Ed Matthews and Lucy Carpenter were elected to the Board of Directors.

□ Report From Iowa:

While she has not yet enrolled the Governor (as did Dick Porter of West Virginia), Verla Kirsch of Iowa has recruited her U. S. Congressman (Representative Tom Harkin), another Iowa Congressman (Representative James Leach), and her State Senator (Senator James E. Briles). Also, as of this writing, Verla is one of the top three recruiters in the nation. Keep up the good work, Verla.

□ An announcement from the Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration:

The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has announced the evaluation study entitled *Evaluation of RSA Programs for Blind and Visually Handicapped Programs* has been completed by JWK International Corporation. The final report consists of: 1) Executive Summary Report, 2) Utilization Seminar Report, 3) In-Depth Study Report, 4) National Report, and 5) Individual State Reports. RSA will be making an initial distribution of these reports to the various State vocational rehabilitation agencies that serve blind and visually handicapped clients.

Anyone interested in obtaining copies of these reports may do so by contacting the National Rehabilitation Information Center (NARIC), 4407 Eighth Street, N.E., Catholic University, Washington, D.C. 20017, telephone (202) 635-5822. Copies will be available in print or tape cassettes. A nominal fee will be charged for handling and processing.

□ From the Northern Chapter of the NFB of Kentucky:

These are the names of our new officers: President, James Joseph Triplett; Vice President, Rebecca Rue; Secretary, Ann Baker; Treasurer, James Risch; Chaplain, Sam Baker.

□ From Cheryl Finley:

The Wine and Cheese party sponsored by the CEIP (Cultural Exchange and International Program) Committee will be held at this year's convention on Sunday, July 5, 1981. This festive event will be at the Lord Baltimore, from 3:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$4.00 each and may be purchased from any CEIP Committee member or from Cheryl Finley, 318 First Street, Clarion, Iowa 50525 and phone 515-532-3319. There will be lots of wine, cheese, and crackers for all to enjoy. Come to this fine tasting adventure and have fun.

There will be soft drinks for those who do not like wine. There may also be a kissing booth, one dollar per.

□ From the Banks Pocket Braille Writer Committee:

S. A. MacKenzie, O.D., Chairman
81 Corey Street
West Roxbury, Massachusetts 02132

Due to increased acquisition costs from the manufacturer in England, the Parkway-Boston Lions Club must raise the cost of the Banks Pocket Braille Writer to \$45.00 per instrument, insured, postage paid. The replacement paper rolls, of an improved quality, we believe, are still being held at 35 cents per roll, postage paid. The above prices supercede all price lists or pamphlets distributed to date.

Repairs to Banks writers are being handled by the Parkway-Boston Lions Club in most cases, rather than shipping to England with the resultant delay. Cost is usually \$5.00 per instrument, return insured, postage paid, and work is guaranteed 90 days.

□ The following announcement comes from the Marine Science Consortium, Inc., National Science Foundation, Marine Science Program for the Physically Handicapped,

237 Brooks Hall, West Virginia University, Morgantown, West Virginia 26506:

Our group runs a summer program in Marine Science for pre-college physically handicapped students under the support of the National Science Foundation.

From the Meridian Chapter, NFB of Mississippi:

We have elected the following officers: President—Bruce Sellers; Vice President—Linda Thornton; Secretary—Necie Boykin; Treasurer—Ophealia Justice; Board Member—Joyce Busby. There are 19 members at the present.

From Ronald A. Horton:

On Saturday afternoon, December 13, 1980, a group of blind people gathered in the home of Mary Kay Lynd in Birmingham, to form a new local affiliate, the Birmingham Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Alabama. The following officers were elected: Mary Kay Lynd, President; John N. Holstun, Vice President; Ronald Horton, Secretary; Karen Ann Horton, Treasurer; Annie Mae Holstun and Lee Ann Brooks, board members.

Under date of February 5, 1981, Governor William Janklow of South Dakota wrote to Karen Mayry, President of the NFB of South Dakota, as follows:

"I have the honor to inform you that I have appointed you to the State Library Board, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 14-1 of the South Dakota Codified Laws. Your appointment is effective immediately and shall continue until July 1, 1982.

"Your service to the citizens of this state is appreciated."

From Karen Mayry, President, NFB of South Dakota:

Federationist Cindy Watts has been named as the outstanding young woman of South Dakota for 1980 by Outstanding Young Women of America. She has a degree in Biology and currently works in the CETA program for the U.S. Forestry Department.

E. U. Parker sends us the following article from the February, 1981, *Reflector*, a publication of State Farm Insurance:

Adoption of right-turn-on-red laws throughout the country has resulted in an estimated 20,000 additional auto accidents each year, 1,400 of them involving pedestrians, according to a recent study.

The laws, initially instituted as a fuel-saving measure, have cost the country a 20 percent increase in the number of crashes involving right turns at traffic lights and a 57 percent increase in the number of pedestrians struck during right turns, the study concluded. The research was conducted jointly by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and Moshman Associates, Inc.

All states and the District of Columbia now permit right turns on red unless specifically prohibited by a sign at the intersection.

Widely varying estimates of savings of the right-turn-on-red laws include:

- 25 to 190 million gallons of fuel per year
- \$0.25 to \$1.70 per vehicle per year (at \$1.30 per gallon)
- 3 to 1.7 hours per driver per year
- 3 to 17 seconds per driver per day

THE BRAILLE MONITOR
1800 JOHNSON STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21230
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